

Statement of J. Brian Atwood
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before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee

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Mr. Chairman, I welcome the opportunity to testify before this distinguished committee in support of the National Endowment for Democracy and the party institutes.

In the last session of Congress, action was taken to prohibit the two party institutes from receiving grant assistance from the Endowment. Opponents of the party institutes raised a number of charges, many of which I am sure will be repeated in this year's debate.

Some Senators expressed serious and legitimate concerns about American parties meddling in the free elections of other democratic states. Others believed that the party institutes would sponsor events whose sole purpose was to entertain American party officials; that the parties were not capable of serious pursuits in the international field.

These charges were made a year ago, before either of the party institutes were in business. They addressed the question of the party institutes only in the abstract, raising fears and portraying a worst-case scenario.

This year, these questions will no doubt be raised again, but this year the party institutes are no longer an

abstraction. Policies and procedures have been adopted and projects are underway. This year Senators can see for themselves whether these institutes have an important role to play in strengthening democratic institutions beyond our borders. I believe we do.

This year the issue is not whether the party institutes, if funded, will use the money for foolish or frivolous initiatives. This year the issue is whether Congress wants to stop the institutes from doing serious and constructive work in the democratic development field. This year the issue will be whether our country wants to turn its back on individuals who are willing to risk their lives to strengthen democracy and who have asked the party institutes for help.

Mr. Chairman, the opponents of funding the party institutes would have the Senate believe that the institutes are arms of the Democratic and Republican National Committees. They would have you believe that we are involved in partisan, political activity. This is not only patently wrong; if it were true, we would be engaged in unlawful activity.

It is important to understand what the so-called "party